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## CURRENT SUPPORT BRIEF

STATISTICAL FALSIFICATION IN SOVIET AGRICULTURE

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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STATISTICAL FALSIFICATION IN SOVIET AGRICULTURE

Western analysts of Soviet agriculture have generally agreed that there has been considerable exaggeration in the official Soviet statistics on production of some of the major agricultural commodities in recent years. A national scandal in the USSR during the past year in connection with the manipulation and falsification of statistics on the production and procurement of agricultural products confirmed this analysis and suggested that downward revisions in agricultural reporting could be expected. Recent adjustments, however, have been upward, probably indicating an attempt to counteract some of the bad publicity given agriculture and to encourage confidence in agricultural production statistics. A sober and unbiased treatment of these statistics, however, may have to await the time when Khrushchev, whose political progress has been so intimately connected with Soviet agriculture, has passed from the scene. At any rate, sizeable downward adjustments do not appear likely in the near future.

The publicized statistical "perversions" have ranged from a simple padding of accounts to more complex methods of deception such as illegal expansion of the private sector on collective and state farms crediting all or part of the additional production therefrom to the respective kolkhoz or sovkhoz.

At the January 1961 Party Plenum, Khrushchev bitterly denounced the practices employed by dishonest persons in order to fulfill or overfulfill plans or pledges. Similar admissions of "fraud and deception" were made at the Plenum by most of the Party First Secretaries from the constituent republics of the Soviet Union. 1/ The confessions at the Plenum by top echelon Party leaders were indicative of the widespread nature of statistical falsification, and the full extent, geographically speaking, of the "deception and fraud" in agricultural reporting was revealed in the months immediately following the Plenum.

As a result of a vigorous press campaign, statistical deception relative to agriculture was uncovered in varying degrees in every republic in the Soviet Union. Government and party leaders from the farm level to at least the republic level, as in the case of Tadzhikistan, were implicated either directly or indirectly as knowledgeable of the facts. Statistical falsification was generally included among the charges levelled against many government and Party leaders who have been removed from office and even expelled from the Party since the January Plenum. A decree issued in May 1961 invoked a prison sentence of up to three years for those persons guilty of making "inflated entries in state accounts or other deliberate distortions of accounts on the fulfillment of plans." 2/ In July 1961, the Soviet Control Commission (Goskontrol) of the USSR Council of Ministers was reorganized as a Union-republic agency "in connection with national economic tasks and the need to intensify checking on the execution of government decisions from top to bottom and to further strengthen state discipline." Among other duties, this expanded commission was charged with "controlling the state of accounting and state reports and uprooting the padding of state reports, deceit and hoodwinking." 3/

The widespread practice of the types of statistical falsification publicized in the press probably resulted in a considerable upward bias in the data on agricultural production, because most of it has resulted from pressures on officials to fulfill or overfulfill plans or pledges. None of the above measures, however, has yet produced the downward revisions which might have been expected. Two statistical handbooks published by the Soviets since the January 1961 Party Plenum provide agri-

17 November 1961

CIA/RR-CB-61-58

Page 2

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

25X1C

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

cultural production data for 1960. One of these was published in March, soon after the Plenum and prior to many public disclosures of statistical malpractices and therefore could not be expected to contain adjustments based on Plenum and post-Plenum revelations. 4/ In the handbook published in August 1961, however, production figures for many commodities as well as for the official index of gross agricultural output (as shown in Table 1) were higher than those published in the March handbook. 5/ A sizable downward revision was made only in the case of cotton, which also was the only crop to be revised downward for previous years.

Small revisions, usually upward, are not unprecedented in Soviet statistics on agricultural production and procurement. However, the upward revision of production statistics for such a large number of commodities is puzzling, especially in view of widespread falsification. While it is possible that the auditing of accounts by control organs had not progressed sufficiently by the time the August handbook was published to incorporate all downward adjustments, the policy of not making downward revisions apparently was expressed in the June 1961 issue of Vestnik Statistiki: 6/

"...the perversions of accounting data by individual workers did not influence the overall totals of statistical works, because the basic indices of the development of the national economy of the USSR are mutually controlled and made precise on the basis of comparability of the different sources and of all-round economic and statistical analysis. These national economic totals do not and cannot arouse any kind of doubts."

While this statement may be true for statistics on commodities over which the Soviet government has complete control and possibly for Soviet statistics in general, it is not true for statistics on agricultural production which are not easily verified by central authorities. The nature of production and utilization of agricultural products provides convenient opportunities for deception. Farm managers and other officials have many opportunities to manipulate the statistics especially for the share of farm production which remains on the farm.

The government has fairly firm statistical control over that part of agricultural production which it procures. However, collusion among procurement and other officials to pad the accounts cannot be completely controlled. The fact that all cotton is procured by the state and production statistics can be verified by ginning records did not prevent high level collusion to falsify the data in Tadzhikistan.

17 November 1961

CIA/RR-CB-61-58

Page 3

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

25X1C

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Table 1

## SOVIET AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION DATA FOR 1960

Category	Official Production Data*	
	March, 1961 7/	August, 1961 8/
Gross Agricultural Output**	221.0	224.0
Grain	133.2	134.4
Cotton (purchases)	4.4	4.30
Sugar beets	56.9	57.7
Sunflower seed	3.83	3.97
Fiber flax	0.426	0.425
Potatoes	84.0	84.4
Vegetables	15.9	16.6
Meat	8.7	8.7
Milk	61.5	61.7
Wool	0.355	0.357
Eggs***	26.4	27.4

\* Data are in terms of million metric tons unless otherwise indicated.  
 \*\* In percent, 1913 = 100.  
 \*\*\* Billions of Eggs.

17 November 1961

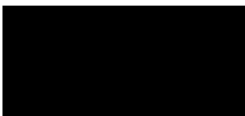
CIA/RR-CB-61-58

Page 4

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

25X1C

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Analyst: 

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17 November 1961

CIA/RR-CB-61-58

Page 5

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L